

Introduction

The Geographic Research Area contribution to the Power Positions Project will consist of two parts. The first part will deal with a limited number of elements which are held to be truly significant and also uniquely geographic. The second part will deal with the relative degree of knowledge of the physical environment that exists between the Free World and the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

In approaching the problem of determining the elements of national power involved in the conflict between the Free World and the Sino-Soviet Bloc, we are faced with the problem of selecting items or topics which are truly geographic. There are a large number of topics which normally enter into a description of a country or a region which are nominally called geographic because they are dealt with by geographers in their description of various parts of the earth's surface. Some of these items may be properly classified as being uniquely geographic; others are more properly the responsibility of a specialist in another field. It is the fact that geographers deal broadly with a large number of fields, which are treated in depth by others, that confuses the line between subjects that are peculiarly geographic and those that, while possessing certain geographic factors, such as location-space relationships, are studied and developed in detail by non-geographers. Those elements of national power which are truly geographic in nature and significant which will be discussed here are: (1) location, (2) size, (3) shape, and (4) boundaries. Other topics -- such as climate, terrain, vegetation,

natural resources, population, ethnic characteristics, transportation and communications, while usually dealt with by geographers and considered as geographic elements, are usually developed by specialists in these particular fields and, except for the geographic factors which are definable in each, are separate fields unto themselves. The determination of the power position significance of these and other related topics is left to the substantive experts in those fields.

The growth and expansion of nations, peacefully or otherwise, is to a large degree conditioned by the state of knowledge of nations of their own and other's physical environment. Any relative disparity in the degree of such knowledge is bound to give one nation or group of nations an advantage in power relationships with respect to others. The Geographic Research Area feels that an assessment of the degree of knowledge of the physical environment that exists in and between the Free World and the Sino-Soviet Bloc is a significant and necessary contribution to the Power Positions project. The Geographic Research Area is sufficiently competent in the broad range of topics which enter into the balance of power to make such an evaluation and takes this opportunity to do so.